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No. 314

AT THE WINDOW

A Comedy in One Act

BY

LILIAN F. CHANDLER

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COMEDY

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NEW YORK
SAMUEL FRENCH

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AT THE WINDOW.

CAST.

MRS. ENID HUNTINGTON.....*A young widow*
MISS JULIA DUNCAN.....*Her aunt*
BLANCHE COMPTON.....*Her friend*
MRS. MAITLAND.....*Another friend*
MARIE.....*Her maid*
THE SWAMI NASHIKAK.
THE MAN.

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no. 1.

AT THE WINDOW.

SCENE:—*A living room. Open. Window at back centre. As the curtain rises, MARIE is discovered at the window, waving her handkerchief, and flirting with someone not seen. Then MRS. HUNTINGTON passes the window, on her way to the house, and when MARIE sees her, she is embarrassed, and runs from the room.*

(Enter MRS. HUNTINGTON in street costume. She hurriedly walks to the window, and looks up and down the street, then walks forward.)

MRS. HUNTINGTON. I wonder if I am in time? How I have hurried! *(Goes and looks out again)* If I am too late, it will break my heart! *(Begins to take off gloves)* Of course, calling or writing is out of the question—and yet—I wonder—*(Rings bell. Enter MARIE)* Marie, has anyone called?

MARIE. But, yes, Madame, there are many.

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Bring the cards. *(MARIE goes out and returns with the cards, MRS. HUNTINGTON looking out of window meanwhile. Takes cards and looks them over)* Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Hunter, Mr. West. If that man would stay away one day—just for the novelty of it! If I could only have a chance to miss him! Mrs. Bradley, Mr. Hastings—There's another swain, as regular as the milk boy. Why don't they realize that absence makes the heart grow fond! Mr. Nash—*(Sorts*

cards hurriedly) Oh, the same old lot! No one new. Where are the letters, Marie?

MARIE. (*Takes letters from table*) Here, Madame!

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Bills, bills, bills, Maud, Edith, Tom Crowell—proposing again, I'll be bound.—Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, without fail. Ah! Here is a strange hand. (*Opens and reads*)

“Beautiful Lady!” Oh!

“Pardon the liberty I take in expressing my unbounded admiration. I have seen you so often! I have watched you on the street—your dainty head erect—your little feet spanning the pavements!” Oh it cannot be! I'm furious—I think! “I have seen you sitting pensively in your window.” It is; it is! “In all moods, under all circumstances, you are beautiful—divine!” Ah! “Would you, oh, would you help—a poor—man—by—letting him—exhibit—your—pictures—in his—photograph—gallery!” (*She throws letter on floor, and stamps on it*) An advertisement! Well, for sheer impertinence, this will certainly take a prize! Marie, what have you been doing in my absence?

MARIE. I sat here in the window, mending the lace of Madame's dress.

MRS. HUNTINGTON. (*Hesitatingly*) Did anyone—go—by—Marie?

MARIE. Go by, Madame?

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Yes, go by—pass the window, I mean.

MARIE. But, yes, Madame; many persons.

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Any—man—Marie?

MARIE. (*Hesitating*) Yes—one, Madame; and (*bashfully*) he—stop—if Madame please.

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Stop? Oh, what did he look like?

MARIE. (*Ecstatically*) Beautiful, Madame! Si tall——!

MRS. HUNTINGTON. (*Excited*) Yes!

MARIE. Si strong!

MRS. HUNTINGTON. (*More excited*) Yes!!

MARIE. Of a grandeur unspeakable!

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Yes! Yes!! What did he do?

MARIE. (*Bashful*) Oh, Madame!

MRS. HUNTINGTON. I am waiting——!

MARIE. Pardon, Madame! He do like zis! (*Throws kiss in manly fashion*)

MRS. HUNTINGTON. *What?* (*Aside*) I shall choke! Well, what did *you* do?

MARIE. Oh, Madame! He was si beautiful——!

MRS. HUNTINGTON. *Well?*

MARIE. Madame, I do like zis, also. (*Throws kiss daintily*)

MRS. HUNTINGTON. (*Swallowing hard*) Did he speak?

MARIE. Yes, Madame—he say—(*Bashfully*) He come to ze window and he say—“Oh, kiddo, you certainly look good to me!” (*Turns aside*)

MRS. HUNTINGTON. (*Aside*) I shall die! I shall die! My maid’s young man—and I love him! he, Marie?

—Oh, the disgrace! (*Turns to MARIE*) *Who* was

MARIE. I fear Madame is angry, but I thought no harm. He is ze—ze—gendame—how you call—ze *policeman*, Madame.

MRS. HUNTINGTON. (*Greatly relieved*) The policeman, Marie! That’s very nice, I’m sure. Why didn’t you say so? Tell him to drop in any time. Ask him to come here and spend his Sundays in, or his Thursdays out—or whatever he has. Tell him I approve. I’ll buy your trousseau. He can come and live with us! I—I—There! Go! I shall not need you. (*Exit MARIE*) I think I am going mad. (*Goes to window again*) I must be too late to-day. Why didn’t I hurry!

(Enter AUNT JULIA. *A very prim person, work in hand.*)

AUNT JULIA. So you have returned at last!

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Oh, yes! I wouldn't be late for anything!

AUNT JULIA. Late for what?

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Why—why—late for anything, I said.

AUNT JULIA. Pah! (*Seats herself at window*)

MRS. HUNTINGTON. (*Hurriedly*) Oh, don't sit there, Auntie!

AUNT JULIA. (*Severely*) Why not? Do you wish to sit here?

MRS. HUNTINGTON. No—oh, no—that is—I——

AUNT JULIA. Well, if you do not, I do! The light in this room is not enough for an owl; and I wish to work.

MRS. HUNTINGTON. (*Resigned*) Very well! I will draw aside the curtains, and give you as much light as possible.

AUNT JULIA. Do *not*! No lady allows the whole world to look into her home.

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Not the whole world, Auntie; only—Ah!

(THE MAN appears and walks slowly past the window. He looks in. MRS. HUNTINGTON stands perfectly still, and watches him ecstatically.)

AUNT JULIA. (*All the time watching MRS. HUNTINGTON. Does not see MAN*) Another of those strange spells! What is the matter with you? Did you see anything?

MRS. HUNTINGTON. (*Recovering herself*) Nothing!

AUNT JULIA. Just as I thought! You can't be well! Your behavior is extraordinary! You are not normal!

MRS. HUNTINGTON. No, Auntie, you are right. I—am—not—normal! (*Exit* MRS. HUNTINGTON)

AUNT JULIA. (*Looking up and down street*) I wonder if she saw anything. But no! She must be ill! I'll attend to her case at once. Already I have put it off too long! (*Works with determination*)

(*Enter* BLANCHE *in street attire.*)

BLANCHE. Good-afternoon, Miss Duncan. They said Enid was here.

AUNT JULIA. (*Grimly*) That doesn't prove anything.

BLANCHE. *Prove* anything!

AUNT JULIA. Exactly! Her movements are, to say the least—erratic. She is here one moment and gone the next. She is nervous—restless. She watches the clock. Spends a great deal of time at this window. Talks rationally, as a general thing, I admit; and yet, at times, she stops suddenly—petrified for a moment or two—and then—By the way; those spells occur always in this room, just about where you are standing.

BLANCHE. (*Hastily jumping off spot*) Mercy! I hope it isn't catching! You alarm me!

AUNT JULIA. (*Solemnly*) Blanche, something is the matter with Enid. She is possessed, and I am going to cure her! I have been attending those Swami lectures. You know those men can cast out devils; and I have made an appointment with one—a Swami, I mean—to cast the devil out of Enid. He is coming here to-day.

BLANCHE. Ha! Ha! Ha! Have you broken the news to Enid? How pleased she will be!

AUNT JULIA. Hush! No! Not a word! It would break the charm! You must stay and see the Swami work. Perhaps you can help!

BLANCHE. Delighted! I wouldn't miss it for

worlds! Are there red fire and incense and—
(*Tragically*) ghosts with streaming hair and pallid faces—thunder and lightning—and, and——

AUNT JULIA. Mercy! No! You make my flesh creep! Wait and see! I am going to my room now, to put my soul in harmony with the All-Good. Enid will be here in a moment.

BLANCHE. Don't mind me! I will compose my soul also.

(*Exit AUNT JULIA. BLANCHE sits laughing, and MRS. HUNTINGTON enters.*)

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Why, you dear thing! Hope you haven't been waiting long.

BLANCHE. Just a few moments; visiting with Aunt Julia. She is worried about you, by the way; thinks you are ill—or out of your mind.

MRS. HUNTINGTON. (*Solemnly*) I think I am myself—if ever I had a mind, or common sense—or—Oh, I don't know what has happened to me!

BLANCHE. My dear! You—the blithe—the joyous—the care free—What *can* have happened?

MRS. HUNTINGTON. I don't know, Blanche; I don't know. I can't sleep! I prefer to sit up and look at the moon. I don't care one bit about fruit salad any more. I hate the theatre; the love-making seems to me so unreal—so unnatural! And only yesterday, I found myself trying to write *poetry; poetry—me!* Think of it! What *can* be the matter?

BLANCHE. Ha! Ha! Ha! (*Continues to laugh*)

MRS. HUNTINGTON. (*Indignant*) What are you laughing about? I thought I could count on *your* friendship.

BLANCHE. So you can, dearest; so you can. To the death! (*Dramatically*) But you don't mean to say that you—a widow—cannot diagnose such

symptoms as those! Why, if I—a maiden—an unappropriated blessing—should develop such a case as that, I should know right away that I was *in love*; and I'd get over it.

MRS. HUNTINGTON. I suppose you will say I am an idiot!

BLANCHE. My dear—the backbone of civilization is our reticence about telling our friends *what* we think of them.

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Oh, well, I don't care! Yes, I am in love—for the first time. Jim was dear, but he was more like my elder brother than a husband. But this is different. I am really in love—head over heels—five fathoms deep—desperately—wildly—hopelessly.

BLANCHE. Cheer up, honey! A good looking girl, and a widow, need never love “hopelessly.” Who's the man?

MRS. HUNTINGTON. I don't know!

BLANCHE. Don't know? Well, Aunt Julia is right. It is a case for the Swami.

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Please, please don't laugh at me! I want friendly advice so badly.

BLANCHE. (*Solemnly*) I'll never smile again; but hurry up! I am simply dying of curiosity.

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Well, then; I was sitting here in the window one morning, when a man passed.

BLANCHE. Wonderful!!

MRS. HUNTINGTON. There you go again! Of all the heartless! But you are not to blame, I should have said “*The*” Man. There is only one man in all the world!

BLANCHE. Horrors! I knew there was an appalling scarcity of them in Massachusetts, but I didn't think it was as bad as that! I'll hang my harp on the nearest willow tree.

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Blanche! *Will* you stop joking! This man—*The* Man—was, as Marie says,

"Si beautiful—si tall—si strong—of a gradeur unspeakable!" He looked at me, and I looked at him, and——

BLANCHE. And—Yes! Went on cutting bread and butter. Oh, you didn't smile—oh, don't say you smiled—nervously, of course?

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Miss Compton, I trust I shall always be a lady, however trying the circumstances. Every day since then, he has passed the house at the same time. He looks at me and I look at him, and—that's all.

BLANCHE. How stupid! Hasn't he spoken one poor word?

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Certainly *not*! No *gentleman* would address a lady whom he does not know.

BLANCHE. Pardon! But Romeo spoke to Juliet. Or no! she spoke to him. Didn't she?

MRS. HUNTINGTON. You know, I've been thinking of that! If I couldn't address him somehow. But how? I can't say "Art thou not Romeo, and a Montague?" for of course he isn't. And if I said—"Speak, speak, thou fearful guest, who in rude armor dressed, cometh to haunt me" he would be angry; for that's not polite. I have thought I would go out and accidentally fall off the doorsteps into his arms; but if I should miss! and the pavements are so hard! Besides—they only do those things successfully in books. Oh, do advise me, Blanche. I'm worn to a frazzle!

BLANCHE. As I said before—cheer up! Auntie is going to cure you.

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Auntie going to cure me? But, Blanche, I don't *want* to be cured.

BLANCHE. You wait! Aunt Julia's doctor can cast out devils. He is coming this afternoon to cast yours out. Now *don't* be angry. Let him come! It will be more fun than a box of monkeys!

MRS. HUNTINGTON. *Very* funny for the *rest* of you, but how about me? I refuse to——

(Enter AUNT JULIA with SWAMI. *He is dressed in a long flowing white robe and turban. He enters solemnly, holding up both hands in greeting.*)

AUNT JULIA. This is the Swami Nashikak, Enid. He has come to cure you of your strange illness.

MRS. HUNTINGTON. I am not ill, Auntie; I will not——

BLANCHE. (*Softly*) Oh, go on, Enid! Be a sport! I haven't had a good laugh in a week.

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Very well: do your worst!

*SWAMI. You must all sit in a circle and do as I do. (*They each take a sofa cushion and sit on the floor. The SWAMI at side, ENID near, and BLANCHE and AUNT JULIA with backs to window*) In the silence! In the silence! (*He breathes deeply several times, then raises arms and lowers them once or twice; then rocks back and forth, silently at first. All imitate his motions. AUNT JULIA, earnestly; BLANCHE with difficulty restraining her laughter, and ENID disgusted. Chanting*)

Out on thee, Vile One! Leave this Lady fair!

Thy fetters loosen, and thy deadly snare

Remove at once! Begone, and come no more!

Thy power is vanquished, and thy work is o'er.

Say "O-o-o-m, O-o-o-m, O-o-o-m.

ALL. O-o-o-m, O-o-o-m, O-o-o-m. (*ALL rock solemnly*)

SWAMI.

So shalt thou, Lady, live in earthly bliss

Free from all bondage; and no fiend like this
Shall trouble thee henceforward. Joyous now and
free.

Calm and contented may you ever be.

Say "O-o-o-m, O-o-o-m, O-o-o-m.

ALL. O-o-o-m, O-o-o-m, O-o-o-m.

SWAMI. (*Suddenly growing excited*) Ah! He moves! He is going! The Devil is gone! See! (*Points frantically to the window, and as he says "See!" the MAN appears, looks in for a moment, and is gone. MRS. HUNTINGTON and the SWAMI see him, but AUNT JULIA and BLANCHE do not turn in time*)

MRS. HUNTINGTON. (*Rises to feet*) But I don't want him to go! I want him here—now—all the time!

AUNT JULIA. (*Sternly*) Enid, I am surprised!

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Don't speak to me, Aunt Julia! I can't bear it! Take that horrid man away this moment! (*She rushes from room*)

BLANCHE. Good-bye, Swami, it has been most enjoyable; most instructive; most exciting!

SWAMI. Farewell! (*Raises hands solemnly, and goes out with AUNT JULIA*)

BLANCHE. Well! Now *what* did Enid see?

MRS. HUNTINGTON. (*Entering cautiously*) Have they gone?

BLANCHE. They have. Come and explain your extraordinary conduct. Whom did you see that you wanted "now—all the time?"

MRS. HUNTINGTON. (*Laughing*) Well, it was just too funny! At the exact moment when the Swami said—"The Devil is gone! See!" The Man appeared at the window. Ha! Ha! (*Growing dejected*) what will he think of me for sitting in that idiotic fashion, with that hideous old fakir?

BLANCHE. He will think that is a very mild freak—when he knows you. But I am just dying for a cup of tea, to steady my nerves. Let us hope your Man won't mind being called a "devil." Ha! Ha!

MRS. HUNTINGTON. (*Rings bell and MARIE enters*) Tea, Marie.

(Enter MRS. MAITLAND, followed by MARIE with tea tray.)

AUNT JULIA. Well, Enid, my poor child, do you feel better now? You can never after this dispute the power of the Swami.

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Auntie, let us never speak of that disgusting creature again.

(Enter MRS. MAITLAND.)

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Oh, Mrs. Maitland, how good of you to come this afternoon! Find a comfortable chair, and let me give you some tea.

MRS. MAITLAND. Thank you. I am fortunate to find you at home. Yes, I will have a cup of tea, I think. I haven't had but eight cups to-day, and ten's my limit.

BLANCHE. Isn't it wonderful how you do it—with your complexion!

AUNT JULIA. Humph! Anyone can have a complexion now-a-days—as long as the money lasts.

MRS. MAITLAND. (Uncertainly) Yes? You were saying——?

MRS. HUNTINGTON. She was saying that you did indeed have a wonderful skin.

MRS. MAITLAND. Thanks, dear Miss Duncan! So good of you! But have you heard the news, girls?

BLANCHE. News? No! What ever happens in *this* town?

MRS. MAITLAND. Oh, my dears! I do assure you! The most *romantic*!

AUNT JULIA. I should think you women were all long past the “romantic” stage.

MRS. MAITLAND. Ah, dear lady! It mostly depends upon whether one is *married* or not. But my news! Of *course*, you are all dining at the Humphrey's to-night. Do you know why?

AUNT JULIA. Certainly! Just because that woman is never happy unless she is showing off that house of hers!

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Yes, we are all going; and I have a new blue chiffon dinner gown that is simply a dream!

MRS. MAITLAND. So glad! You will need it! er—I don't mean that, but I want you to look your best to-night, for you may be the lucky one you know.

MRS. HUNTINGTON. The lucky one? Please explain.

MRS. MAITLAND. Well, isn't that what I am *trying* to do?

AUNT JULIA. Young woman, I have a book on the art of conversation, which I will lend you. It will teach you to come to the point—if there is one in your ramblings.

MRS. MAITLAND. (*Vaguely*) You were saying—I fear I am a little deaf. Well, girls, as I began to tell you—*There is a Man*.

BLANCHE. Wonderful! Marvelous, Mrs. Sherlock Holmes! This is the second time to-day I have heard that *There is a Man*. I wonder if it is the same man.

MRS. HUNTINGTON. (*Ecstatically*) Oh, if it only *might* be!

MRS. MAITLAND. I am sorry, my dear, but I fear not. There is *only one Man*.

BLANCHE. Then it is the same, for there is no other man than the man I heard about.

(*As she speaks the MAN comes to the window, and lays a rose on the sill, with a note attached. He goes away without being seen.*)

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Hurry up and tell us the rest, Mrs. Maitland. We are crazy to hear.

MRS. MAITLAND. It seems that Mrs. Humph-

rey's English cousin is visiting them; and he's an *Earl*, my dears—the Earl of Hartford. *Think of it!*

AUNT JULIA. And of course he has come over for some American girl's money. All of them do.

MRS. MAITLAND. No, he's a *bachelor*, and *fabulously* rich. And, oh, my dears! It's the most romantic! The Humphreys haven't been able to persuade him to meet anyone since he came. He has just walked about town by *himself*. They supposed it was his *haughty, exclusive English way*; but it seems he has formed the most *romantic* attachment for a *charming* creature, whom he happened to see the day he arrived. He finally confessed his infatuation to the Humphreys, and told them where the girl lived. Fortunately, she is in our set, so they know her, and they have invited her to dinner to-night, with the rest of us—to meet him. Of *course*, *she* doesn't know a *thing* about his visiting there, or *loving* her, or being an *Earl*, or *anything*.

AUNT JULIA. Humph! Don't you believe it! No doubt the hussy has been flirting with him from her window.

MRS. MAITLAND. No! *Really!* Mrs. Humphrey just *told* me! He swears he *never* did *anything* but *look* at her. But they will be regularly introduced to-night; and Mrs. Humphrey has fixed up the most *romantic* place in the conservatory—near the *fountain*, you know, and of course he will propose, and, she—Oh, girls! Isn't it the most *romantic!* I'm almost *sorry* I'm *married!*

AUNT JULIA. And no doubt your husband is.

MRS. MAITLAND. I'm so *curious* to know who she is, I can't *wait* till the time comes! Isn't she *lucky!* But I must run. Good-bye! Good-bye! So *sorry* for your—your toothache, Miss Duncan! It makes people so *ill-natured*, doesn't it!

(MRS. MAITLAND *goes out.*)

MRS. HUNTINGTON. Oh, Blanche, if it only *might* be he, and I the girl!

BLANCHE. I believe it is! Good luck, dearest! I must go too. I want to be in time for the denouement. Cheer up, Enid. You do look ravishing in that blue chiffon! Au revoir.

AUNT JULIA. Wait a minute, Blanche. I want to show you my new fern. (*They go out*)

(MRS. HUNTINGTON *alone, sees rose on sill. Takes it up, pulls off note, opens and reads.*)

MRS. HUNTINGTON. (*Reading*)

"At last, I dare approach you; and to-night, I shall have the happiness of speaking with you in my cousin's home. If you are glad, wear my rose, and stand in your accustomed place, when I pass.

All yours, as you know.

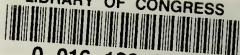
HARTFORD."

Hartford! The Earl of Hartford! (*Presses note to her lips*) Oh, I hope I shan't die before eight o'clock!

(*She fastens rose in her gown, and stands waiting.*
THE MAN *passes slowly, lifting his hat.*)

CURTAIN.

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